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A

DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

AN ASSOCIATOR

AND

A WELL-INFORMED

ENGLISHMAN,

ON

THE GROUNDS OF THE LATE

ASSOCIATIONS,

AND

THE COMMENCEMENT OF

A WAR WITH FRANCE.

LONDON:

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A

DIALOGUE, &c.

Mr. MORDAUNT, Mr. GRANTLEY.

Mr. MORDAUNT.

FROM the friendſhip which has ſo long ſubſiſted betwen us, I am induced, Mr. Grantley, to take the liberty of aſking you a few queſtions relative to your political conduct; and which, I know, your candour will excuſe. What were your inducements for ſubſcribing to the late Aſſociation of the town of ******, to which I ſaw your name affixed in the papers?

Mr. GRANTLEY.—My inducements, Sir? A deſire to join a body of peaceable and ſubſtantial inhabitants and tråders of the town, in order to ſecure our common property from any attacks of lawleſs violence, and the excellent

government under which we live, from any of the wild ſchemes of Republicans and Levellers. My property, my good friend, has coſt me a great deal of time and pains to accumulate; and I am not willing to be deprived of it, or that it ſhould be put to hazard, in order to comply with the reveries, or to gratify the wiſhes, of thoſe who have no property to loſe.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—I take it for granted, my dear friend, that your deſigns were good; and you were certainly right to endeavour to ſecure your property, if it was in danger. But I have no conception that it was in any danger; and it appears to me, that the paper you ſigned was drawn up in terms, and contained ſentiments, not very congenial to what uſed to be the free ſpirit of this country. No man is more an enemy than myſelf to any acts of violence againſt the perſons or property of individuals, and to the idea of promoting liberty by a diſregard to law. But we ſhould remember, that the ſecurity of property which has long obtained in this country, has reſulted from the freedom of our conſtitution, and not from aſſociations for the ſupport of prerogative. If our anceſtors had not been wiſely jealous of authority, and ſolicitous to keep it within proper bounds, we ſhould not at this time

time have any ſecurity either for our property, or for our perſonal liberties.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—Sir, the very title of our Aſſociation implies, that we had not forgotten the importance of liberty; for it is ſtyled "an "Aſſociation for the preſervation of Liberty and "Property."

Mr. MORDAUNT.—I obſerved that it was ſo ſtyled, but, as I think, with very little conſiſtency; for I have no idea of that ſort of liberty, which excludes the freedom of ſpeaking, and of writing. You ſay in your declaration, "We "will exert our moſt diligent endeavours to "ſuppreſs ſeditious clubs, ſeditious converſa-"tion, and ſeditious publications."

Mr. GRANTLEY.—But ſurely, my good friend, Mr. Mordaunt, men cannot fairly be ſaid to be deprived of the freedom of ſpeaking, or of writing, becauſe they are prohibited from ſpeaking ſeditiouſly, from publiſhing ſeditious books, or from forming themſelves into ſeditious clubs.

Mr.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—Sir, the words SEDITION ard SEDITIOUS are very vague words, and of very indeterminate meaning. There can be nothing that deſerves the name of liberty in any country, in which every kind of ſpeaking or of writing is prohibited, that will be termed ſeditious by placemen, penſioners, courtiers, and crown lawyers. And every ſociety which can be inſtituted, though on the pureſt and beſt principles, in which political queſtions are diſcuſſed, and in which a juſt attention is excited to the general rights of the community, will be termed by ſuch men ſeditious. If LOCKE on Government, or SYDNEY on Government, were new treatiſes, no doubt can be entertained, but that many of the modern aſſociators would conſider them as ſeditious publications, and proper ſubjects for proſecution. Some of the aſſociators alſo profeſs themſelves to be united, not only for the ſuppreſſion of ſeditious publications, but for the ſuppreſſion of ſeditious opinions. But in a country, profeſſedly free, are opinions to be combated, not by reaſon and argument, but by force and violence?

MR. GRANTLEY.—I admit, that too great reſtraints ought not to be laid either on ſpeaking or

or writing. But can it be wrong to put a ſtop to the publication of ſuch books, as tend to ſubvert all order and government, and to throw the nation into a ſtate of anarchy and confuſion?

Mr. MORDAUNT.—I know not, that any ſuch books have been lately publiſhed; but whatever may have been publiſhed, the law, or what is called the law, reſpecting libels, and the powers veſted in the crown and the crown officers, are more than ſufficient for proſecuting and puniſhing, with great rigour, all who can with the leaſt ſhadow of reaſon be denominated libellers. There could be no poſſible occaſion, therefore, for voluntary aſſociations for this purpoſe, or for any new methods of reſtraining the freedom of ſpeaking or of writing.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—Sir, it was the opinion of ſome of my friends and neighbours, in which I concurred, that at the preſent period it might be uſeful to ſtrengthen the hands of government, and to do what we could towards ſupporting the preſent conſtitution, and the eſtabliſhed laws; by which we ſuppoſed we ſhould alſo take the beſt method of ſecuring our own property.

Mr.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—It is paying a bad compliment to the government, and to the adminiſtration, to ſuppoſe, that voluntary aſſociations are neceſſary to procure obedience to the laws, and the ſecurity of property. The executive government of this country is veſted with ſufficient powers, for all the real purpoſes for which government is inſtituted; and if men do not find their perſons, or their property, in a ſtate of ſecurity, it is not from any want of authority in government. I muſt alſo obſerve, that the idea of ſecuring property, by an indiſcriminate ſupport of adminiſtration, is not founded on reaſon, nor countenanced by the evidence of hiſtory. In the reign of Charles I. many men of large fortune joined the king, probably under the idea of ſecuring their property, and of putting a ſpeedy termination to popular commotions. But the part they took, in the courſe of the civil war, deprived them of that property, for the preſervation of which they had been ſo anxious. Had they, on the contrary, oppoſed, in a regular and legal manner, the arbitrary proceedings of the king, he muſt have ſubmitted, their property would have been ſecured, and no civil war would have taken place. If any adminiſtration be encouraged,

by

by the ſervility and timidity of perſons of property, to engage in obnoxious meaſures of government, the property of theſe men may often be endangered, by the very means which they take to ſecure it. The wiſeſt mode of defending the conſtitution, and ſecuring property, is for men of fortune to oppoſe, in a legal and conſtitutional manner, all oppreſſive, unjuſt, and impolitic meaſures of government, and thereby compelling the perſons in office to reſtrain the exertions of prerogative within proper bounds. A reaſonable, moderate, and equitable adminiſtration, and paying a juſt attention to the real grievances of the people, is the beſt method of preſerving the conſtitution, and maintaining national tranquillity.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—I believe, Sir, that your obſervations are juſt. You have attended to theſe ſubjects much more accurately than I have done. But I have been aſſured, and ſo have ſome of my brother aſſociators, by men whom we ſuppoſed to be very reſpectable, that the conſtitution was in great danger; that conſpiracies were formed againſt it; and that it was neceſſary, that all real friends to the conſtitution ſhould unite in its ſupport.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—How can you poſſibly ſuppoſe, my good friend, that any real conſpiracy of this kind can have been formed, when, though it is now ſo long ſince this report was given out, not a ſingle perſon has been taken up, even on ſuſpicion of ſuch a plot? The late attorney-general, I am told, condeſcended to go to the ſeſſions at Clerkenwell, to plead againſt a poor bill-ſticker. Can any man in his ſenſes then believe, that, if any ſuch conſpiracy had really exiſted, the vigilance of government would not have diſcovered one man, whom they might have had ſome plauſible pretence for apprehending?

Mr. GRANTLEY.—Indeed, Sir, it is not very probable. I muſt acknowledge, that the evidence of the plots has been kept a moſt profound ſecret. But you muſt admit, that libels upon the conſtitution have been circulated about, and other publications, calculated to give the people an ill opinion of government.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—It has always been ſuppoſed in my time, Mr. Grantley, till very lately, by all judicious men, that the people of this country derived the moſt ſignal advantages from

from the freedom of the preſs; and that it was highly beneficial to the community, that the conduct of the perſons in adminiſtration ſhould be publicly inveſtigated. And as to the apprehenſions of the dangers that may ariſe from what is called libelling the conſtitution, theſe appear to me to be the idle terrors of men, who are ignorant even of the firſt principles of civil government. If the conſtitution be good, it will bear the fulleſt and the freeſt inveſtigation. Indeed, the greateſt libellers of the conſtitution are many of the aſſociators; they who ſuppoſe, that it will not ſtand the teſt of examination, and that it cannot be ſupported, but by ſuppreſſing the freedom of ſpeaking and of writing. We are ſometimes told, that our conſtitution of government is the beſt in the world; and we are likewiſe told, that we have, beſides, a very excellent adminiſtration. If this be the caſe, is it poſſible, that either the conſtitution, or the government, can be in any real danger from the publication of a few pamphlets?

Mr. GRANTLEY.—The danger cannot probably be great: but it is ſaid, that there are many republicans in the kingdom.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—I have not heard even of one republican club in this country, or of any body of men whatever, who have aſſociated for the purpoſe of eſtabliſhing a republic. But there may certainly be ſpeculative men in the kingdom, who conceive, that a republic would be better than a limited monarchy. It is no crime for any man to entertain that opinion, if he be guilty of no illegal act in order to ſupport it. There have always been ſuch ſpeculative men in this country, and there ever will be ſuch men in it, till we are become a nation of ſlaves. What the number of republicans may be in the kingdom, I will not take upon me to determine; but this I will venture to aſſert, that the preſent meaſures of adminiſtration are not calculated eventually to leſſen their number.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—It is certain, that there are ſundry ſocieties in the kingdom, the Revolution ſociety, the ſociety for Conſtitutional Information, and others, who frequently publiſh votes, and ſometimes diſperſe publications, that give great offence to government, and to many who are conſidered as moderate men; and I have heard the deſigns of theſe ſocieties ſpoken of as very pernicious. Indeed, it is underſtood, that

men

men in power, who may reaſonably be ſuppoſed to have good information, entertained very ſerious apprehenſions reſpecting the miſchiefs which theſe ſocieties might probably produce.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—Unprincipled courtiers and placemen, who fatten on the plunder of the public, are always alarmed at the leaſt approaches towards a national reform. A clamour, therefore, has been artfully raiſed, which has terrified the timid, and deceived the ignorant and unſuſpecting. The prime object of moſt of the ſocieties of which you ſpeak, was to excite the attention of the people to the neceſſity of a parliamentary reform; and their deſigns were unqueſtionably laudable. Theſe ſocieties were not always thought of ſo unfavourably as they are at preſent; nor were they regarded as dangerous. I have ſeen the preſent duke of Richmond both at the Revolution ſociety, and at the ſociety for Conſtitutional Information; he then appeared to enter fully into their views; and ſo far as I can judge, their deſigns are as upright now as they were at that period. Sir William Jones, the very learned and excellent judge now in the Eaſt Indies, was alſo one of the members of the ſociety for Conſtitutional

tional Information, and ſometimes wrote odes for the uſe of that Society; one of which was ſet to muſic, and performed at a public dinner of the ſociety. But at that time, it was not thought a diſcredit to any man to be a friend to the rights of the people; and the duke of Richmond was not then maſter of the ordnance.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—I believe, however, Mr. Mordaunt, that when the duke of Richmond was a member of thoſe ſocieties, they did not carry on any correſpondence with the French nation.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—They did not, Sir. The French Revolution had not then taken place; and there was no reaſon or opportunity for ſuch a correſpondence. But the intercourſe of theſe ſocieties with the people of France has been no diſcredit to them; the correſpendencies of theſe ſocieties have been groſsly and ſhamefully miſrepreſented; and they have only been employed as an abſurd pretext to deceive and to inflame the nation. Theſe correſpondencies were founded on principles of general philanthropy; and not the leaſt evidence has been produced of their originating in motives of any other kind. The members

members of theſe ſocieties remembered with the apoſtle, that God had *made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth*; and they wiſhed, that the bleſſings of liberty might be extended to all mankind. They certainly differed materially in opinion from many of the aſſociators, who are ſo far from wiſhing that liberty may be extended to other nations, that they ſeem extremely deſirous that it may be wholly extinguiſhed in their own country.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—I am convinced, that many have engaged in theſe aſſociations chiefly from an anxiety for the ſecurity of their property, without much attention to any other conſiderations.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—Of this I have no doubt; but the anxiety of men for their property ſhould not make them regardleſs of their duties, or their rights, as Engliſhmen. The man who is anxious for his property, and regardleſs of his liberty, ſcarcely deſerves even to breathe the air of a free country. But with reſpect to attacks on property, I know that property has been ſhamefully violated, and the lives of very reſpectable

ſpectable men endangered, at Birmingham, and Mancheſter, and other places; but I know, at the ſame time, that the actors in theſe riots, and the inſtigators of them, theſe violators of the ſecurity of perſons and of property, were not thoſe who are called republicans and levellers, but men who profeſſed a very ardent zeal for the church and for the king; and every man knows, that theſe loyal rioters have not been proſecuted by the government with too much ſeverity. I have heard of no riots in any part of England, by Republicans and Levellers. All the rioters, who have lately made any diſtinguiſhed figure, were Church and King men.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—One idea which has prevailed, and which has contributed to enflame the minds of ſome perſons, is, that pains had been taken to propagate among the common people the doctrine of EQUALITY; or, that all perſons ſhould be rendered equal in point of fortune, or property: a doctrine, which would certainly lead to great confuſion, and to very ſerious evils.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—The doctrine of an equality of property has not been propagated by any

any of the ſocieties of the friends of liberty in Great Britain. It has not been propagated by the Revolution ſociety, by the ſociety for Conſtitutional Information, or by any of the ſocieties for parliamentary reform, or by any ſociety of the friends of freedom of which I have ever heard. It is equally certain, that it is neither advanced nor recommended in the writings of Mr. Paine. If the doctrine has been at all diſſeminated among the people, it has been by thoſe truly libellous publications, which have been iſſued by the pretended aſſociators againſt republicans and levellers. In order to calumniate the real friends of freedom, they have undertaken to refute a doctrine which no man advanced; and thereby may have communicated ſome ideas of an equality of property to the loweſt of the vulgar, which may at ſome time be productive of miſchief. But it has been juſtly obſerved by the biſhop of Landaff, that "if any "perſons have been ſo ſimple as to ſuppoſe, "that even the French ever intended by the "term EQUALITY, an equality of property, "they have been quite miſtaken in their ideas." This learned prelate alſo adds, that "the French "never underſtood by it, any thing materially "different from what we and our anceſtors have

" been in full poſſeſſion of for many ages." This is probably ſpeaking too ſtrongly; but the French certainly meant an equality of rights, and not an equality of property. The ideas of the popular ſocieties in England concerning equality are perfectly conformable to thoſe of the duke of Richmond, who ſays, in his letter to lieutenant-colonel Sharman, " The equal rights " of men to ſecurity from oppreſſion, and to the " enjoyment of life and liberty, ſtrikes me as " perfectly compatible with their unequal ſhares " of induſtry, labour, and genius, which are the " origin of inequality of fortunes." Nor do any of the popular ſocieties carry their ideas of the importance, or extent, of a parliamentary reform, farther than that nobleman. He ſays, in the ſame letter: " The ſubject of a parlia- " liamentary reform is that which of all others, " in my opinion, moſt deſerves the attention of " the public;—and, from every day's experience " to the preſent hour, I am more and more con- " vinced, that the reſtoring the right of voting " univerſally to every man, not incapacited by na- " ture for want of reaſon, or by law for the com- " miſſion of crimes, together with annual elec- " tions, is the only reform that can be effectual " and permanent." The ſame noble writer likewiſe

likewiſe ſays in that letter, after ſtating that no effectual reform was to be expected from the houſe of commons themſelves, "It is from "the people at large that I expect any good."

Mr. GRANTLEY.—Beſides the particular doctrine of equality, I have heard much ſaid concerning the diligence, with which French principles in general have been propagated in this country, as well as in others; and the danger of the contagion of thoſe principles has been ſtrongly urged.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—But what are theſe French principles, concerning which ſo much alarm has been ſpread? Before we join in abuſing French principles, theſe principles ſhould be more diſtinctly ſpecified. What are called French principles appear manifeſtly to have had their origin in England; and to be the ſame which have been advanced by ſome of the beſt and ableſt of the Engliſh writers. The French nation has maintained, that "All men are born, and remain, free and equal in rights; that ſocial diſtinctions cannot be founded but on common utility; that the end of all political diſtinctions is the preſervation of the natural

and impreſcriptible rights of man; that theſe rights are liberty, property, ſecurity, and reſiſtance againſt oppreſſion; that the principle of ſovereignty reſides eſſentially in the nation, or people at large; and that no body of men, nor any individual, can exerciſe an authority that does not emanate expreſsly from that ſource." Theſe are the principles which appear to have given ſo much offence to the German deſpots: but in what reſpect do they differ from the principles of SYDNEY and of LOCKE? SYDNEY has proved, that "all juſt magiſtratical power is from the people; and that liberty is the right of all mankind:" and LOCKE maintains, that "all legitimate government is derived from the conſent of the people; that men are naturally equal, and that no one has a right to injure another in his life, health, liberty, or poſſeſſions; that no man in civil ſociety ought to be ſubject to the arbitrary will of others, but only to known and eſtabliſhed laws, made by general conſent for the common benefit; that no taxes are to be levied on the people, without the conſent of the majority, given by themſelves, or by their deputies; that kings and princes, magiſtrates and rulers of every claſs, have no juſt authority but what is delegated to them by the

the people; and which, when not employed for their benefit, the people have always a right to reſume, in whatever hands it may be placed." The French principles have been aſſigned as a reaſon for engaging in a war with France; but are we to carry on a war againſt France, to eradicate ſuch principles as theſe, to eradicate the principles of SYDNEY and of LOCKE? Of all the nations of the earth, are the people of England to be ſelected, to engage in a cruſade, to prevent the propagation of the principles of liberty?

Mr. GRANTLEY.—Whatever the principles may be, which have been propagated in France, it cannot be queſtioned, but that many acts of violence and cruelty have been perpetrated in that country ſince the revolution.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—As to the acts of cruelty, violence, or injuſtice, which may have been committed in France ſince the revolution, that ſome ſuch ſcenes ſhould have taken place can be a ſubject of ſurpriſe to no man, who has any knowledge of human nature, or acquaintance with the hiſtory of the world. It could not be expected, that ſo enormous a ſyſtem of civil, eccle-

eccleſiaſtical, and ariſtocratical tyranny, as that of which the old government was compoſed, could be ſo completely overturned, without very violent convulſions. It muſt alſo be remembered, that the formation and eſtabliſhment of a new ſyſtem of government, ſo as to give complete ſatisfaction to twenty-five millions of people, muſt be a work of extreme difficulty. And even the beſt and the wiſeſt men, engaged in ſo arduous a work, would often find their efforts embarraſſed, or fruſtrated, by the intrigues, ambition, or perverſity, of ſuch evil-minded or abſurd men, as are to be found in every country under heaven. It will undoubtedly be a very deſirable thing to ſee tranquillity eſtabliſhed in France; but the German deſpots, who entered that country with their numerous and mercenary armies, had certainly no deſign to communicate to the French nation a happy mixture of liberty and law; nor was the tyrannical, inſolent, and ſavage manifeſto of the duke of Brunſwick, well adapted to that end.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—But what, Mr. Mordaunt, have you to ſay, with reſpect to the manner in which the French put their late king to death, who was certainly not one of the worſt princes of the Bourbon race?

Mr.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—Whether Louis XVI. the late king of France, was put to death juſtly, or unjuſtly, is a matter in which the people of England have very little concern, and which can undoubtedly afford no proper ground for any war with the French nation. This is admitted even by Mr. Pitt himſelf. When Charles I. was executed before the front of his own palace, France did not go to war with England on that account, though Charles's queen was a French princeſs. No nation can ever have a right to dictate to other nations, what ſhall be their mode of government, or what their conduct to their princes. This appears to me to be unqueſtionable, and to be a part of the law of nations; though it may poſſibly be diſputed by Mr. Burke. For, before the execution of Louis, that gentleman declared, that "he thought the king of France to be as "much an object both of policy and of compaſ-"ſion as the grand ſeignior, or his ſtates." And, perhaps, if the Turkiſh nation had taken it into their heads to depoſe, or behead the grand ſeignior, and to aboliſh the excellent ſyſtem of government which prevails in Turkey, Mr. Burke might have thought it a juſt ſubject of very pathetic lamentation; and might have been

been of opinion, that it was a proper thing to ſend an Engliſh fleet and army to Conſtantinople, to correct the ſeditious ideas which the Turks began to adopt, and to lead them to a due ſubmiſſion to their lawful and eſtabliſhed government.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—Mr. Burke's ideas of kings, and of courts, were not, I think, always ſo reverential as they are at preſent.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—By no means. He formerly ſpoke of kings as naturally lovers of low company, which was not placing them in a light the moſt reſpectable; and, in 1780, he told the citizens of Briſtol, that it was at that time "the plan of the court to make its ſervants "(that is, the miniſtry) inſignificant;" though he obſerved, that "among the frolics of the "court, it might at length take that of attend-"ing to its buſineſs." He alſo told them, that if the people choſe their repreſentatives on the ſame principles with which the court choſe its miniſters, there would be no hopes of ſafety for the ſtate. "If the people," ſaid he, "ſhould "chooſe their ſervants on the ſame principles of "mere obſequiouſneſs, and flexibility, and total "vacancy

" vacancy or indifference of opinion in all public
" matters, then no part of the ſtate will be
" found; and it will be in vain to think of
" ſaving it."

Mr. GRANTLEY.—Theſe compliments to the court were certainly not of the moſt flattering kind; but, to leave Mr. Burke, I have met with ſome perſons who conſider the conduct of the French in Germany, and in Flanders, as very indefenſible. Not content with eſtabliſhing a republic in their own country, they have endeavoured to propagate principles of government ſimilar to their own in the dominions of foreign princes.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—But, my dear Sir, it muſt be remembered, that the countries into which the French entered, previouſly to the declaration of war againſt England and Holland, were the territories of princes who had entered France with fire and ſword; and that, in perfect conformity to the laws of war, they had an undoubted right to attack the dominions of theſe princes. The invaſion of France by the Auſtrians and Pruſſians was repugnant to every principle of juſtice and the law of nations; and,

when the French had driven them out of their own dominions, they had an inconteſtable right, according to the rules of war, to enter the Auſtrian or Pruſſian dominions, and, if they could make themſelves maſters of them, or of any part of them, to treat the inhabitants as conquered enemies. But what has ſo much exaſperated the German deſpots has been, that the French, not content with defeating the princes by whom they have been attacked, have been ſolicitous to communicate liberty to their ſubjects. This is conſidered as an inexpiable crime; but it might be preſumed, that it would not have excited any great indignation in Engliſhmen.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—It has been aſſerted, that the French have ſent over agents, in order to excite tumults and rebellion in Great Britain.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—Yes, I know that it has been ſaid, in an advertiſement of one of the aſſociations, and I think the worſt and the moſt unconſtitutional of all the aſſociations, that "the "emiſſaries of France were very numerous, and "active to ſeduce the people of this country, "and to excite them to inſurrection." But, from the beſt information which I can collect upon the

the ſubject, I am convinced, that this is a groundleſs aſſertion; and, indeed, not the leaſt evidence of the exiſtence of ſuch emiſſaries in this country has ever been produced.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—It muſt be acknowledged, that theſe French agents have kept themſelves in a ſtate of great privacy; for I have never met with one of them myſelf, nor do I know of any man who has.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—Whatever our ſentiments may be, concerning the late tranſactions in France, and the circumſtances attending the Revolution in that country, there cannot ſurely be any very good reaſon, why Engliſhmen ſhould diſcover ſo much alacrity, as many of the aſſociators ſeem to do, in ſurrendering up ſome of their moſt important rights. For the people of England to be forming aſſociations, in every part of the kingdom, to deſtroy the freedom of the preſs, and freedom of ſpeech, appears to me to be very much like the inhabitants of a country confederating together, in order to enſlave themſelves: which is a thing ſomewhat new in the hiſtory of mankind.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—Though there may be improprieties in the declarations of ſome of the aſſociators, it cannot be ſuppoſed, that the generality of thoſe, who have joined in theſe aſſociations, have any deſign to deſtroy their own liberties.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—Whatever their intentions may be, many of their declarations are extremely hoſtile to the freedom of the preſs, and to freedom of ſpeech, and are ſuch as could never have been expected to appear in a free country. I have copied out ſome of the reſolutions of different bodies of aſſociators; and, among others, I find that the worthy inhabitants of Baſingſtoke, in Hampſhire, have reſolved, "That it is highly expedient to caution all "inn-keepers, and victuallers, not to permit "any ſeditious publications TO BE READ, or "DEBATED, in their reſpective houſes." To a foreigner, who ſhould read this advertiſement, it would appear ſomewhat extraordinary, that, in England, which formerly was celebrated as a country diſtinguiſhed for its liberty, common publicans ſhould be inveſted with a power of dictating to their cuſtomers what books they ſhould read, and about what they ſhould debate, and

and be ſuppoſed proper perſons to determine what books were, or were not ſeditious. Dr. Sacheverell, biſhop Atterbury, the advocates of the houſe of Stuart, and the old Tories, would have been aſhamed of propoſing what is done by the modern aſſociators under a prince of the houſe of Brunſwick. The inhabitants of Market Drayton, in the county of Salop, ſay, "We will be vigilant in the detection, and "zealous in the proſecution of all ſuch perſons, "as may attempt to alienate the affections of the "people from the eſtabliſhed conſtitution, either "by the circulation of diſaffected publications, "ſeditious converſation, or any other illegal "means whatſoever." The honeſt aſſociators of Tring, in Hertfordſhire, declare, that they are warm friends to the liberty of the preſs, and to freedom of opinions; but they afterwards add, with admirable conſiſtency, "We will exert "ourſelves collectively, and individually, to "diſcover the authors, publiſhers, and diſ-"tributors of ſeditious and inflammatory wri-"tings." Can there be any thing like the liberty of the preſs in this country, if the inhabitants of every pariſh are to be formed into committees of accuſation againſt libellers, or thoſe who may be termed ſuch by the tools of power?

power? But the men of Tring alſo reſolved, that it ſhould be "forcibly recommended" to all inn-keepers, and victuallers, in that pariſh, not to permit any ſeditious and treaſonable language to be uttered, or any inflammatory writings to be read in their houſes. If any man in an inn, or tavern, were to read ſome of Mr. Burke's ſpeeches, or to uſe ſuch language as the duke of Richmond and Mr. Pitt did formerly about a reform in parliament, or Mr. Burke about kings and courts, would not ſuch reading, or ſuch language, be deemed ſeditious, or as tending to ſedition? And yet our laws have given no peculiar privilege to theſe gentlemen, to uſe language that is unlawful to other men; at leaſt, not out of parliament.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—I obſerve, that you repeatedly quote and refer to Mr. Burke; though I ſhould ſuppoſe that gentleman could hardly be one of your favourite authors.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—Sir, I have been a diligent reader of the writings of Mr. Burke; though I am often puzzled, as his friends, as well as himſelf, muſt alſo be, to reconcile his old politics with his new. But in his old ſpeeches and

and writings, a mixture frequently appeared of eloquence and reaſon; though in his oratorical and literary efforts, for ſome time paſt, the latter ingredient ſeems to have been almoſt wholly omitted. But, to return to the aſſociators. The inhabitants of St. Sepulchre's, London, have reſolved, "That it ſhould be earneſtly recommended to all perſons keeping inns, taverns, coffee and public houſes, within that pariſh, to diſcourage, to the utmoſt of their power, every ſeditious meeting, club, or inflammatory diſcourſe, at their reſpective houſes, tending to ſubvert the public peace." The worſhipful ſociety of inn-keepers, vintners, and victuallers of Briſtol, have alſo declared, not only that they will, to the utmoſt of their power, ſuppreſs any inflammatory writings, and uſe every endeavour to bring the authors to juſtice, but that they would "mutually agree to diſcloſe, and make known, any treaſonable or ſeditious expreſſions which might come to their knowledge, in order that the guilty perſons might receive due puniſhment." Similar declarations have been made in other places: but, Sir, at a time when Engliſhmen had the feelings of free men, no man of the leaſt ſpirit would have entered the houſe of a publican,

publican, who had ſigned ſuch a declaration, or entered into ſuch an aſſociation. Not only landlords, but female publicans, are raiſed to the office of cenſors of clubs, ſuperintendants of the converſation of men, and regulators of the proper boundaries of political diſcuſſion. Some of the worthy aſſociators of the county of Suffolk have reſolved, that they "would point out "every publican within their reſpective pariſhes, "as unfit to retain a licence, who did not exert "him or *herſelf* to preſerve good order, and to "prevent meetings or clubs, in which ſeditious "or treaſonable ſubjects are agitated, being held "at his or *her* houſe."

Mr. GRANTLEY.—Truly, ſome of theſe things are too ridiculous. But, when men are in a great tremor, as was the caſe with many of my brother aſſociators, their conduct cannot be expected to be in perfect conformity with reaſon.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—If the ideas of many of theſe aſſociators were to prevail, a man would go to Spain or Portugal, or even to Turkey or Morocco, in order to enjoy the benefits of liberty, and the pleaſures of free converſation. At all events,

events, a man, who loved liberty, would change much for the better, by going from London to Berlin; where, though an highly military and deſpotic government is eſtabliſhed, the people are not deprived of the freedom of converſation. It appears to me, that if any aſſociations are neceſſary in this country, the aſſociations wanted are, not aſſociations for the ſupport of prerogative, but for the maintenance of the rights of the people. The aſſociators, and thoſe who have acted in concert with them, have endeavoured to ſuppreſs all freedom of political diſcuſſion. It is well known, that a municipal magiſtrate has forcibly ſuppreſſed a ſociety, meeting for the purpoſe of political debate. But, in former times, ſuch conduct, in a magiſtrate in the ſame ſituation, would not have been endured. When alderman Harley was lord-mayor of London, any man poſſeſſed of that office would have paſſed his time in the metropolis very unpleaſantly, if he had attempted to ſuppreſs the various public debating ſocieties which then ſubſiſted. It was not then thought a crime for men, old or young, publickly to deliver their ſentiments concerning the balance of Europe; and, indeed, the criminality of political diſcuſſion, in

the city of London, ſeems to be quite a new diſcovery.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—Sir, there have been great changes in the minds of men, ſince the period to which you refer.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—Yes, there have been great changes. We have ſeen corporations, who uſed to go up to the throne with the language of free men, ſince approach it with language little better than that of ſlaves and ſycophants: and, among the novelties of the age, it is not one of the leaſt edifying, to ſee Mr. Alderman Wilkes at the head of an aſſociation for the ſuppreſſion of ſeditious libels. But as to the aſſociators, ſome of them, under the pretence of ſupporting law and the conſtitution, have been guilty of acts of groſs and ſhameful oppreſſion. But the perſons, whom they have chiefly injured, have been men in narrow circumſtances, and who, having little property, were incapable of procuring the protection of the law; which, whatever may be ſaid of its excellency, and of that of our conſtitution, every man who has the leaſt knowledge of the world muſt be convinced, is not the ſame for the rich and for the poor.

poor. Some of the aſſociators alſo encourage private and anonymous information, and conduct themſelves in ſuch a manner, that no man, who has any pretenſions to the character of a gentleman, or a man of honour, ought to be preſent at any ſuch aſſociations.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—In the former part of our converſation, Mr. Mordaunt, you diſcovered much diſlike at our being engaged in a war with France: but you ſhould remember, that the French firſt declared war againſt England.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—They certainly did. But were not the meaſures, adopted by the Britiſh miniſtry, naturally calculated to produce ſuch an event? How were the French to continue in a ſtate of peace with a nation, or an adminiſtration, who would not treat with their ambaſſador, or enter into any negociation with him; and by which he was ſent out of the kingdom diſreſpectfully and precipitately? When M. Chauvelin was ordered to quit the kingdom in eight days, was not then war virtually declared by the court of England? I have never yet been able to learn, that, previouſly to the time when that miniſter

was ordered to leave this country, the Britiſh nation had received either injury or inſult from the republic of France. As to the objection ſtarted againſt acknowledging M. Chauvelin as a miniſter, becauſe he did not receive his credentials from a king, but from a great nation, this is an objection ſuited only to the underſtandings of the lords of the bed-chamber, and the maids of honour. Men of ſenſe and ſpirit, not rendered ſervile by court connexions, muſt reject it with diſdain.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—It was peremptorily aſſerted by the miniſters in parliament, that a ſtrict neutrality reſpecting France had been obſerved by the court of Great Britain.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—It was ſo aſſerted; but when we examine into the facts, do we find that this neutrality was really adhered to? Was not the exportation of corn to France prohibited, though it was permitted to other countries? In the ſituation in which France was then known to be, was not this an act eminently hoſtile? And was not the Alien bill a clear violation of the Commercial treaty with France, though that treaty

treaty was manifeſtly and highly beneficial to this country?

Mr. GRANTLEY.—Much has been ſaid concerning the attempt of the French to open the navigation of the Scheldt; and, as the Dutch are our allies, it has been thought, that this alone was a ſufficient ground for engaging in a war with France.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—It could not poſſibly be a proper ground of war, becauſe it was admitted even by Mr. Pitt himſelf, that the States General of the United Provinces, who only could be aggrieved by opening the navigation of the Scheldt, had made no requiſition on this ſubject to the court of England. The opening of the Scheldt was in no reſpect likely to be injurious to Great Britain. On the contrary, there was ſtrong reaſon to believe, that it would have been highly beneficial to our trade and manufactures. Was England then to be involved in a war with the French nation, becauſe they had "procured "for a people the uſe of a river that gave them "a free communication with the ocean, and "opened even to the Engliſh a more direct "mode of communication with the Belgic pro-"vinces?"

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Mr. GRANTLEY.—Well, Sir, but the war, whether properly, or otherwiſe, is now commenced; and it has been ſaid, that "when "once our country is engaged in a war, all "queſtions relating to the neceſſity, or pro-"priety, of entering upon it, ought to be ſuſ-"pended till its concluſion."

Mr. MORDAUNT.—I am, Sir, by no means of that opinion. If a nation has entered into a war unjuſtly, or with too much precipitation, they cannot be too ſolicitous to bring about its termination. Surely, the lives of human creatures are worthy of ſome attention, perhaps of as much attention as the reputation of miniſters of ſtate. Though a war be commenced, yet as the repreſentatives of the people have a right, ſo the people at large have alſo a right, to examine, whether there was ſufficient cauſe for the war, and whether proper meaſures were adopted by the miniſtry for its prevention? A nation muſt be enſlaved indeed, who are not permitted to expreſs their deſires to be delivered from the calamities of war, if they believe, that the continuance of war will not promote either the intereſt, or the honour of their country.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—It muſt at leaſt be admitted, that, by the conſtitution, declaring war, and making peace, are a part of the royal prerogative.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—By the preſent conſtitution, the power of making war or peace is undoubtedly veſted in the king. But the prerogatives of the king were conferred on him for the benefit of the nation, and they are to be exerciſed for the advantage of the people, and not to their detriment; and they have always a right to inquire, whether the royal prerogatives are ſo exerciſed.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—But what could induce the miniſtry to engage in a war, or the parliament to concur in it, if there was any reaſon to believe, that it would be eventually injurious to the nation?

Mr. MORDAUNT.—It is often difficult, Sir, to penetrate the real motives and deſigns of miniſters and courts. We muſt not ſuppoſe, that adminiſtration, or the parliament, have been induced to engage in any meaſures pernicious to the nation, by "that glaring and "dazzling influence at which the eyes of eagles

"have

" have blenched," to adopt the luxuriant language of Mr. Burke. But we may be permitted to aſk, whether it is a thing totally new, and abſolutely impoſſible, for the miniſtry, and even the parliament of England, to be engaged in meaſures unfavourable to the real intereſts of the people? Does not the American war afford demonſtrative evidence of the poſſibility of ſuch an event? What high language was aſſumed in parliament, early in the conteſt between Great Britain and the colonies? One of the miniſters, ſtanding in his place, in the houſe of commons, would not " deign to inquire where a Congreſs of vagrants " was to be found." What was the reſult? " I conceal," ſays Mr. Burke, " the ridiculous " figure of parliament, hurling its thunders at " the gigantic rebellion of America; and then, " five days after, proſtrate at the feet of thoſe " aſſemblies we affected to deſpiſe; begging " them, by the intervention of our miniſterial " ſureties, to receive our ſubmiſſion; and " heartily promiſing amendment." And, in another ſpeech, the ſame gentleman ſays, " We " ſent out a ſolemn embaſſy acroſs the Atlantic " ocean, to lay the crown, the peerage, the " commons of Great Britain, at the feet of the " American congreſs." Theſe things ſhew, that neither miniſtries, nor parliaments, are infallible.

fallible. And as to the war now entered into with France, I could have wiſhed, that the cauſes and reaſons of that war had been rendered more obvious to common and vulgar underſtandings. For however highly we may eſtimate the wiſdom of parliament, plain men, who are ſomewhat in the habit of exerciſing their underſtandings, will wiſh to know, for what reaſon they are to pay new and accumulated taxes; and will be led to inquire, whether our war with France be founded on juſtice, or policy; and whether the object of it be to eſtabliſh the claims of foreign deſpots, and to enforce the doctrines of tyranny?

Mr. GRANTLEY.—I confeſs, Sir, to ſpeak candidly, that however ready I might be to concur in the aſſociations, from the idea of ſecuring my own property, I could never very clearly diſcern the reaſons, or the neceſſity, for a war with France. Without, however, being fully convinced of the propriety of the meaſure, I attended to the arguments that were urged in its ſupport; and was willing to give as much credit as I could to the rectitude of the views of the miniſtry, and to the wiſdom of their adminiſtration.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—Few things, I think, are more evident, than that a nation overwhelmed with debts and taxes, as Great Britain now is, ought to engage in no war but in a caſe of extreme neceſſity. Johnſon ſays, "As war "is the laſt of remedies, *cuncta prius tentanda*, "all lawful expedients muſt be uſed to avoid it. "As war is the extremity of evil, it is ſurely "the duty of thoſe, whoſe ſtation intruſts them "with the care of nations, to divert it from their "charge." It ſeems extraordinary, that a nation ſhould be ſo injured as to have occaſion to go to war, and yet no man be able to give a clear account of what the injury is. I know, from the moſt authentic information, that, before the war, the French were more deſirous of being at peace with the people of England, than with any other nation. They were ſo far from being inclined to treat the Engliſh injuriouſly, that if any man in France were known to be an Engliſhman, he was treated with reſpect merely on that account. As the French nation were ſtruggling for their liberties, they expected no countenance or ſupport from the deſpots of Europe. But they naturally thought, that a brave and free nation, like that of England, who had often ardently contended for

their

their own liberties, would view with eſteem and approbation another nation, exerting every nerve in the ſame noble cauſe; and they hoped, that this eſteem and approbation would not have been withdrawn, on account of thoſe irregularities of conduct in a part of the French nation, which could hardly excite much ſurprize, when the difficulties and peculiarity of their ſituation were juſtly and candidly conſidered. It ſhould alſo be remembered, that part of the irregular and indefenſible acts which have happened in France, may reaſonably be attributed to thoſe evil diſpoſitions in the lower order of the people, which are the natural reſult of a deſpotic government. When a regular ſyſtem of free government has been longer eſtabliſhed, when the people have been accuſtomed to the union of liberty and law, their conduct will become leſs cenſurable. A tyrannical form of government naturally produces cruelty of diſpoſition; and men muſt have been ſome time in the habit of enjoying freedom, before they can either experience or exhibit all its advantages. But as to the late aſſociations in England, I am apprehenſive, that they have contributed much more, than the people are aware, to the commencement of hoſtilities with France. If theſe aſſociations had a tendency to encourage the miniſtry

to involve the nation in a war, to which before they might be too much inclined, but concerning which they might be irresolute, from their doubts respecting the temper of the people, they may then justly be considered as very serious evils. For I know of nothing that is so likely to be fatal to the welfare and prosperity of this country, and to the security of the present establishment, as a war with the French nation.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—It is certain, that war must greatly contribute to increase our taxes, and to lessen our trade, and may eventually be productive of great national calamity.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—Many men of large property seemed very ready to join in the associations. But I do not think, that their conduct has at all contributed to increase the security, or the value of their property. As to those persons, whose property is chiefly lodged in the funds, they could hardly have adopted any measure more pernicious, than that of supporting any administration, which should be inclined to involve the nation in an unnecessary war. Such an event must have a natural tendency to lower the funds, though this may not be its immediate effect.

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The preſent critical ſtate of Holland, and of other parts of Europe, may have occaſioned foreigners to depoſit large ſums in our funds, which would, for ſome time at leaſt, prevent that diminution in their value, which was otherwiſe to be expected. But the preſent ſtate of things cannot laſt long; and no men will probably be greater ſufferers by a war than the ſtockholders.

Mr. GRANTLEY.—There ſeems much reaſon in what you have advanced. I have myſelf conſiderable property in the funds; and, if I had before viewed the matter in this light, I ſhould not have been quite ſo ready to join in the aſſociations.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—A war with a nation conſiſting of twenty-five millions of people, and that nation contending for its liberties, is certainly a buſineſs of a very ſerious nature; and, however it may terminate, it is a war in which no honour can be obtained on the part of Great Britain. I feel for the honour, as well as for the intereſt of my country; and, therefore, it gives me deep concern, whenever I ſee it at once injured and diſgraced. What the conſequences

may

may be of a war with France, no man can with certainty predict. But that great preſent evils muſt be the reſult, cannot be queſtioned with the leaſt appearance of reaſon. Superficial and uninformed men, little acquainted with the hiſtory of nations and of wars, may be much elated at a few advantages, which may be gained over the French at the commencement of a war; but theſe advantages, if they ſhould be obtained, may produce little effect with reſpect to the final termination of the war, and to the ſtate of things when a peace ſhall take place. Defeats of the French in Holland, or in Flanders, may not materially affect the French revolution; nor can it with any degree of reaſon be expected, that the antient government will ever be reſtored. Such an event can, indeed, be wiſhed for by no man, who is not an enemy to the liberty of the human ſpecies; ſuch an event could be favourable only to the eſtabliſhment of deſpotiſm in Europe. I would aſk then, What honour will Great Britain derive from a junction with German deſpots; and whether the eradication of the principles of liberty will be a compenſation for the millions that will be expended, and for the lives that will be loſt? Are the blood and treaſure of

England

England to be laviſhed in a war, from which the people of this country have not the moſt remote proſpect of the leaſt poſſible advantage? Whence are we to derive any compenſation for the increaſe of taxes, the loſs of trade, and the decay of our manufactures? What are the objects of the preſent war, and what will probably be its termination? I would aſk farther, Will thoſe profuſe declarations of loyalty, which have been made by the aſſociators, either leſſen the public burthens, improve our conſtitution, or eventually promote national proſperity, and national tranquillity?

Mr. GRANTLEY.—Sir, upon duly conſidering all that you have ſaid, I am ſenſible, that I have entered into the aſſociation, in which I have engaged, without ſufficiently conſidering its nature, or its conſequences; and of the evils and dangers of the war, in which we are unhappily involved, I have now the fulleſt conviction.

Mr. MORDAUNT.—I am glad, Sir, that you are convinced you have been in the wrong; and I honour you for the candour of your acknowledgement. Many others will ſoon be convinced of

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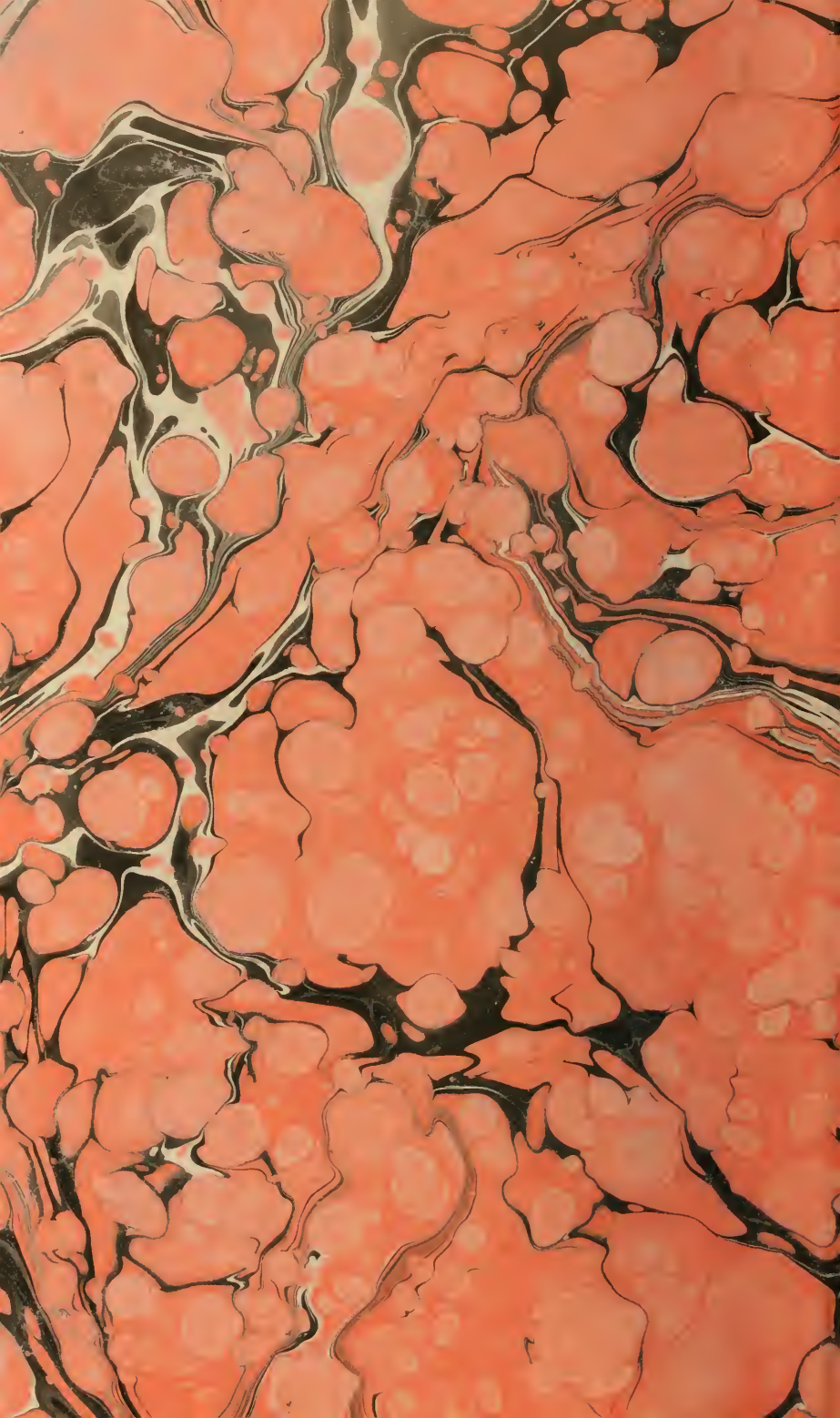
of their error. They will be inſtructed by reflection, and by the progreſs of events. The people of this country have been under a temporary deluſion. But the deluſion cannot laſt long. The nation will recover its antient energies. The people will remember, that the princes of the houſe of Stuart were expelled this country, and deſervedly expelled, becauſe Engliſhmen would not ſubmit to a tyrannical adminiſtration. They will remember, that the princes of the houſe of Hanover were raiſed to the throne of Great Britain, in order to confirm and eſtabliſh the rights of the people: and they will reſolve to maintain, at whatever hazard, the FREEDOM OF CONVERSATION, the FREEDOM OF DEBATE, and the FREEDOM OF THE PRESS.

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